

FOUR: GREENPRINT CHALLENGE IMPLEMENTATION

The City of Lincoln and Lancaster County are endowed with two pivotal factors that provide a strong foundation for successfully implementing the Greenprint Challenge.

First, we have been bestowed with an abundance of natural resources, ranging from native tallgrass prairies to saline and fresh water wetlands. The City and County contain vast areas of productive agricultural land, abundant streams and creeks, as well as a rich variety of scenic, recreational and cultural resources.

Second, we are fortunate because our residents realize the value of these resources to both present and future generations. This recognition was revealed most recently in a community-wide survey that showed the citizenry's desire to elevate natural resources as a meaningful element in long term land use and development planning.

As envisioned from the outset, Greenprint was designed to identify key resource imperatives and accompanying themes that can help guide local planning activities. The next step is to implement the ideas and visions embodied in this report. This section defines the actions needed to bring about the further implementation of the Greenprint Challenge described throughout this document.

The proposed implementation approach for the Greenprint Challenge for the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County encompass four major elements:

- ◆ Greenprint Planning Initiatives
- ◆ Public-Private Partnerships
- ◆ Funding Opportunities
- ◆ Interagency Coordination and Planning Administration
- ◆ Core Resource Imperatives

GREENPRINT PLANNING INITIATIVES

The City and County are presently pursuing several significant planning studies that relate to the Greenprint Challenge. Each of these are discussed in further detail in the following subsection of the report.

CITY-COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Although local land use planning is a continuous activity, this is a particularly critical time for the City and County as they work to develop a new long range Comprehensive Plan. This process involves a major reexamination of the current Comprehensive Plan's basic policies and elements. The resulting new Plan will likely set the future direction for growth and development for decades to come.

The community—through a statistically valid attitude survey and other citizen involvement mechanisms—has indicated that preservation of the City and County's natural resources and environmental features is a future they desire, even if it means the expenditure of public funds.

As part of the formulation of the new Comprehensive Plan, a 14-member citizen committee— a.k.a., Comprehensive Plan Committee—has been established. The draft “Comprehensive Plan Vision” prepared by the Committee supports the concept of environmental stewardship:

“Clean air, clean water, parks and open space, mature trees, signature habitats, and prime and productive farmlands are valuable assets. Conservation areas, floodplains, green spaces, and parks define, and help create linkages between, neighborhoods and surrounding population areas. The Comprehensive Plan takes into consideration the effects of natural phenomena not only upon localized development, but also the community as a whole, upon private ownership issues, and upon recreational opportunities. The Plan thus commits Lincoln and Lancaster County to preserve unique and sensitive habitats and endorses creative integration of natural systems into developments.”

As the Committee and the community-as-a-whole work to formulate a new Comprehensive Plan, the Greenprint Challenge recommends that the following items be taken into consideration:

- Greenprint should serve as the ecological footprint for all related planning activities for the New Comprehensive Plan, and as such should become the base map upon which further land use and development planning is completed.
- Greenprint should be both a chapter in the new Comprehensive Plan as well as serve as a key component in the preparation of other chapters including parks, recreation and natural areas sections of the Plan.

- The full range of natural and cultural resource information sources contained in Greenprint should be made available to the participants of the current comprehensive planning process.
- As part of the eventual implementation of a new Comprehensive Plan, a study should take place to ensure there are mechanisms to sustain Greenprint concepts. For example, in the land use change review process should consider such site ranking criteria as vulnerability, completeness (habitat), rarity (community types), manageability (scale, location, financial resources), connectedness, and nature-oriented human use potential.

CITY PARKS FORUM

Through the auspices of Lincoln Mayor Don Wesely and the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department, the City of Lincoln has received a planning grant through the City Parks Forum.

The City Parks Forum (CPF) is a program managed by the American Planning Association (APA) for the purpose of expanding the ways in which cities address parks and open space needs. The CPF grant has been awarded to Lincoln expressly for the purpose of designing a program to implement Greenprint concepts.

As presently programmed, the City Parks Forum grant can facilitate the implementation of the Greenprint through the following actions:

- Organize and conduct a community summit open to all citizens, environmental groups, public and private agencies and resource people to gather input and enlist public support for the Greenprint. This step should be completed within the next two to three months.

- Develop priorities and strategies for implementing the Greenprint.
- Develop a marketing plan as well as promotional literature.
- Contract for technical assistance to develop a public land trust.

OTHER CITY-COUNTY STUDIES AND ACTIVITIES

In addition to the new Comprehensive Plan and the City Parks Forum tasks, the City and County are also pursuing numerous planning and implementation efforts.

These include, but are not limited to, such notable activities as the Floodplain Task Force, Wilderness Park expansion, various Basin-Wide Stormwater Management Studies, Stevens Creek Basin Planning Initiative, wetland bank development, and public ways corridors implementation. As these planning and implementation efforts occur, it is recommended that the following actions be pursued:

- Establish a clearly coordinated effort between the study's sponsors and the City-County Planning Department regarding the concepts embodied in the Greenprint.
- Integrate the "core resource imperatives" in the mission statement or study purpose of these efforts.
- Expanded the use of the digital information bases utilized in the overall Greenprint process.
- Seek a continued dialogue between participants regarding the Greenprint Challenge as these studies progress.

MISCELLANEOUS GREENPRINT IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

As part of the overall implementation of the Greenprint Challenge, the following research and planning tasks should be pursued:

- Incorporate scientific data on flora, fauna, geology and archeology into the Planning Department's "Natural Resources-Geographic Information System" (GIS) as they become available
- Document historic, cultural and archeological sites throughout the county
- Collect baseline data on wildlife needs and strategy for inclusion in Greenprint
- Create Site Ranking Criteria for threatened sites
- Develop a County-wide Park and Recreation Plan
- Document land valuation effects of natural areas and parks
- Investigate and develop a land trust

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Effective public and private partnerships can play an important role implementing public policies and related strategies. The Greenprint elevates the role of sound environmental planning with development, and therefore requires communication and understanding between all affected groups.

The City of Lincoln, Lancaster County and Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (LPSNRD) should work together to provide the leadership to effectively communicate the concepts identified in the Greenprint. This may include:

- Conduct outreach efforts that bring private land owners, environmental interests and the development community together regarding the purpose and need of the Greenprint are critical steps in the implementation phase.
- Further the understanding of the Greenprint and its positive impact on all groups as exhibited by the concept of “twice green results” that can promote a common ground among diverse interest groups.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Lincoln and Lancaster County have been fortunate to have had public-minded citizens and organizations contribute land and resources to provide the framework for a quality park system. Additional parks have been made available as open space supporting flood control structures or flood protection areas.

Unfortunately, however, there has not been a systematic, long-term sustainable capital improvement program to acquire future park lands and natural areas.

To assist in the long-term implementation of the Greenprint Challenge, the following types of actions should be considered and appropriate action taken:

- The City and County need to develop a capital programming approach that will provide for the acquisition of park property and natural areas shown in the Greenprint to ensure that they are preserved and protected.
- Grant funding resources—such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, various floodplain and water related funding programs, the Nebraska Environmental Trust, and other sources—should be sought on a continuing basis.
- A variety of entities have been discussing the feasibility of initiating a land trust. This should be set up immediately to enable donations of land and funding, and to encourage estate planning. A recent grant from the City Parks Forum has allocated funds for some start-up assistance.

PLANNING ADMINISTRATION AND INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

Seeking improvements that further planning administration and interagency coordination covers a broad range of activities and agencies.

Planning administration and interagency coordination generally involves work undertaken by the City of Lincoln, Lancaster County and Lower Platte South Natural Resources District in implement their plans, policies and programs. All have fiscal and physical planning procedures that are utilized to advance various jurisdictional goals—the Greenprint can become an important tool in the decision-making process that support these procedures.

The City of Lincoln, Lancaster County, and the LPSNRD should investigate approaches in short- and long-range fiscal and physical planning decision making processes that integrates the ideas contained in the Greenprint Challenge. These should include the following actions:

- Investigation the creation of a county-wide Parks and Recreation Department with responsibilities to maintain and operate park and natural resource areas outside of Lincoln and its extra-territorial limits.
- Investigate the use of environmental planning policies on sensitive areas such as prairies, wetlands, and stream corridors that ensure community and administrative oversight when changes in land use are sought.
- Encourage the further use of conservation easements on environmentally sensitive lands and utilize the purchase of development rights and other similar techniques as appropriate.
- Elevate the importance of environmental analysis in all aspects of land use planning.
- Develop planning policies and procedures for acreage development consistent with the Greenprint Challenge.
- Conserve and preserve natural resources through the amendment of City and County zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations to encourage the concepts identified in the Greenprint
- Coordinate all future trail network extensions and enhancements.
- Develop management guidelines for natural areas.

- Inventory and work to further park and open space opportunities referenced in existing plans—such as the present Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan (e.g. Crescent Green Park Plan), Wilderness Park Subarea Plan, and Lower Platte South Natural Resources District Stevens Creek Watershed Management Plan.
- Cooperatively plan for the long-term preservation of existing and future public and private conservation areas.

Even though most of the participating agencies have broad natural resource responsibilities and public recreation authority, enabling legislation and statutory authority can create specific roles for State or local agencies. Some examples include:

- The Lower Platte South Natural Resources District has primary responsibilities in soil and water conservation. It is therefore logical to assume they would have special expertise and interest in riparian corridors, floodplains, and wetlands. They have a strong tradition in providing trail opportunities, developing flood control structures that sometimes have public recreation, and obtaining conservation easements on sensitive lands.
- The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has State Recreation Areas and wildlife management areas in the County providing multiple outdoor recreation opportunities. They also have special expertise in managing wetlands.
- The Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department offers a multitude of parks and recreation programs and has managed Wilderness Park under the auspices of the County Board.

These circumstances suggest that effective interagency coordination is desirable. With this in mind, it is specifically recommended that the participating agencies pursue the following actions as part of the Greenprint Challenge implementation:

- Determine the appropriate agency to manage and/or hold title to resources identified in the Greenprint. Although it is envisioned that many of the resources discussed in Greenprint will remain in private ownership with special protections, for some it will be in the public interest to have them under public control.
- In connection with earlier Greenprint recommendations, there needs to be a governmental entity identified that has the specific authority to maintain and operate a park and recreation program on a county-wide basis. Although certain responsibilities clearly match the authority and expertise of the LPSNRD and Game and Parks, a more expansive and involved study should be made to determine the applicable management and operating structure of such an entity.

CORE RESOURCE IMPERATIVES

Based upon their review of available information—along with their knowledge of the region and of the individual resource imperatives—the Greenprint Cabinet identified three “Core Resource Imperatives” for Lancaster County.

These imperatives are considered to be those allied natural resource features that should receive the greatest consideration in the long-range planning process.

The identification of these three imperatives should not be taken to mean that other natural features are unimportant, inconsequential, or

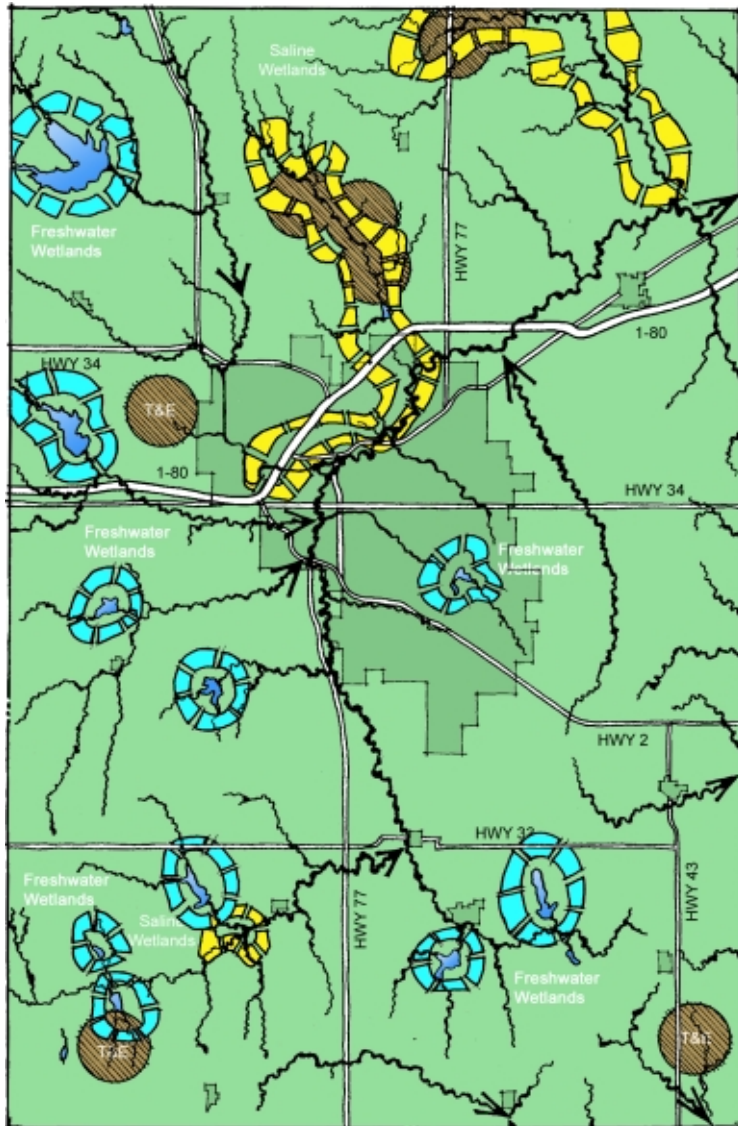
expendable. The “Core Resource Imperatives” uniquely contribute to the natural resource heritage of the region and whose safeguarding for future generations is indispensable. Other elements that may not be included nevertheless remain important to the long-term environmental and economic viability of the community and should not be inordinately discounted.

The three “Core Resource Imperatives” (illustrated on the following pages) called for within the Greenprint Challenge are as follows:

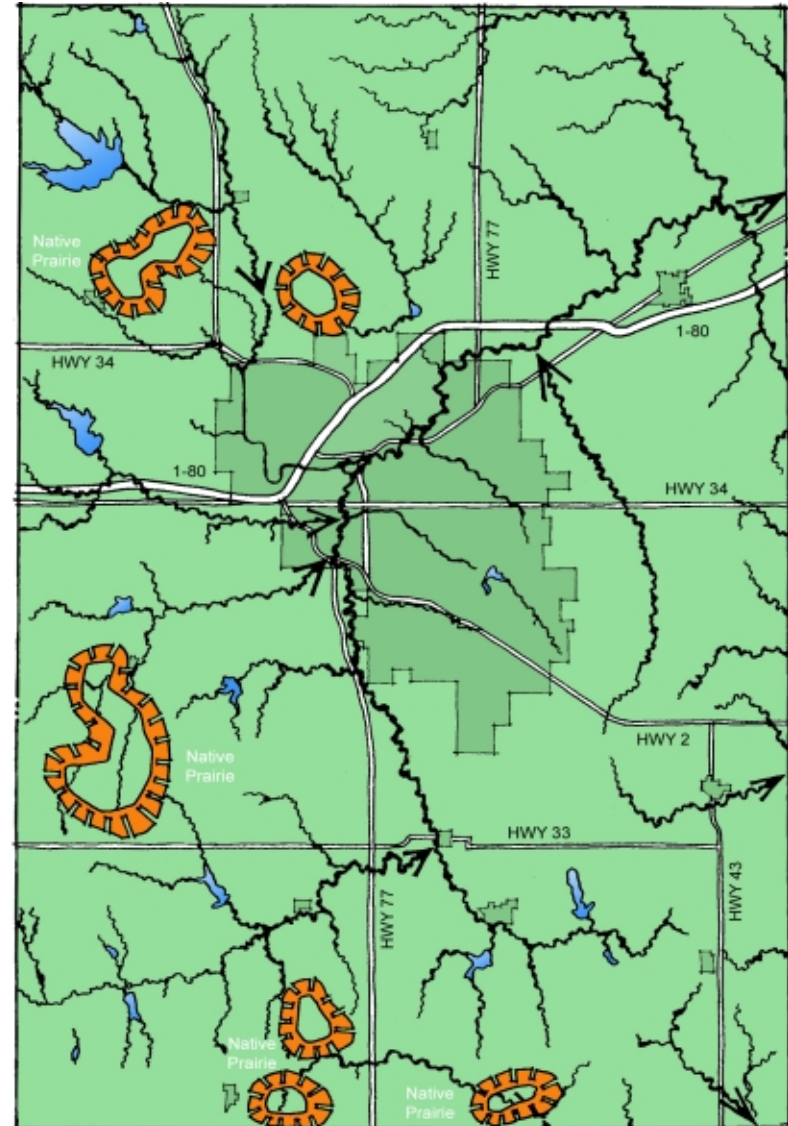
Saline and Freshwater Wetlands – Wetlands provide distinctive habitat opportunities for various plants and animals, as well as offering flood control and water filtration benefits. For example, Lancaster County is home to approximately 1200 acres of the very rare Eastern Saline Wetlands. These saline wetlands offer a unique habitat to numerous threatened and endangered species, including the Salt Creek Tiger Beetle.

Native Prairies – Prior to the European settlement period, tallgrass prairies dominated the Nebraska landscape. Native prairies remnants remain scattered throughout the County, providing a home to numerous grasses, wildflowers and forbs. The remaining native prairies are becoming more rare and thus are increasing in value as an ecological amenity. The prairies are a key component of the signature landscape the first Europeans encountered when they settled in Nebraska and remain a visual cue to Lincoln and Lancaster County’s “sense of place.”

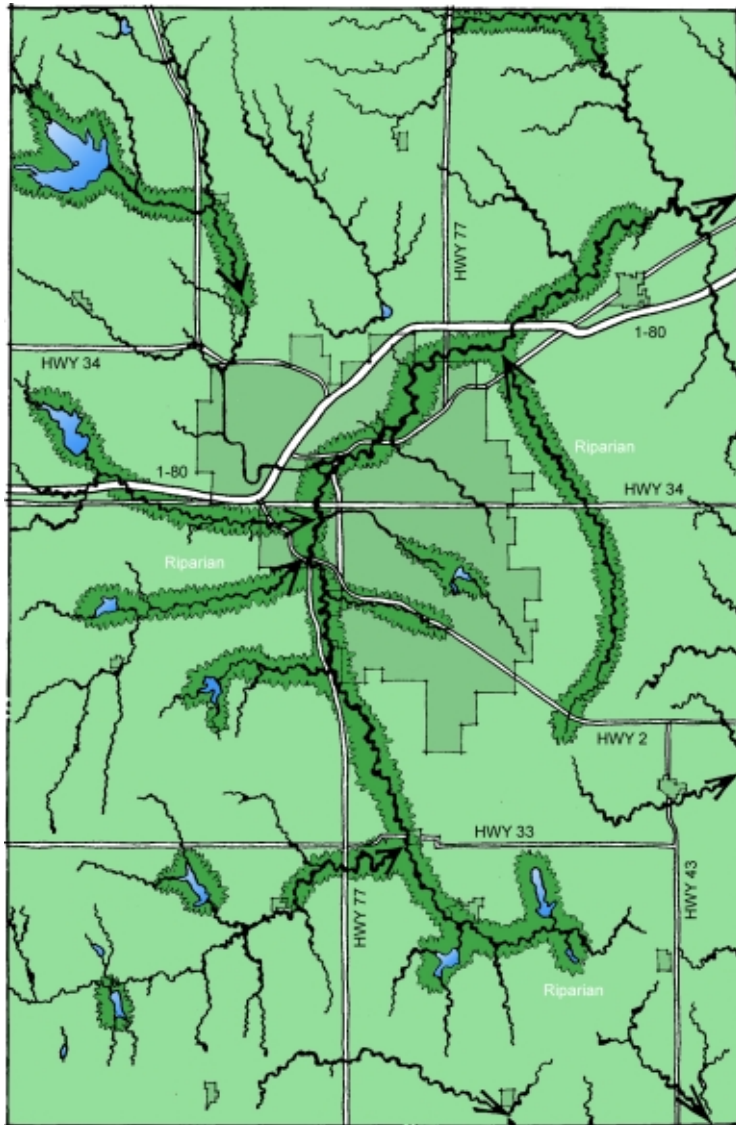
Stream Corridors – Streams and their adjoining corridors snake their way throughout much of Lancaster County. Through the region, surface water runoff flows into these stream corridors that typically consist of floodplains and riparian areas. They are instrumental in providing habitat and water filtration benefits, along with serving as connectors to substantial natural areas.



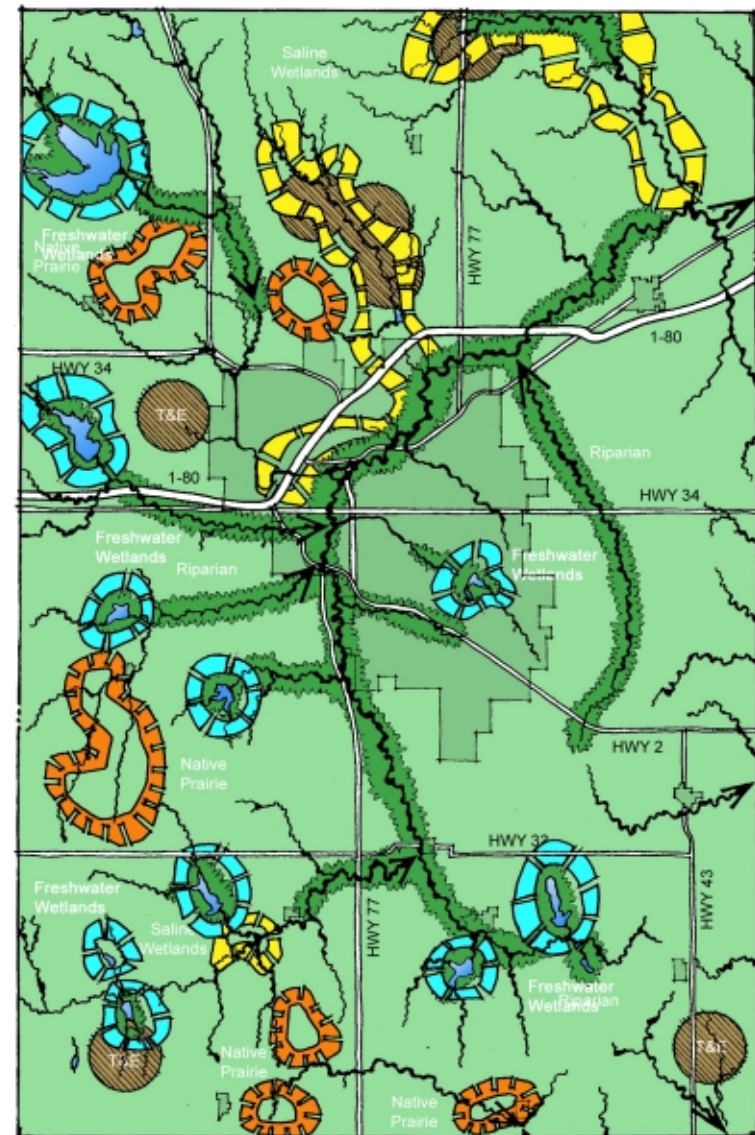
**Core Resource Imperatives:
Saline and Freshwater Wetlands**



**Core Resource Imperatives:
Native Prairies**



**Core Resource Imperatives:
Stream Corridors**



**Core Resource Imperatives:
Composite Map**